

MAL BLASTS WINDSWEPT WANDERERS

By STUART EARP Dagenham 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0

HAVING held Dagenham to just one goal in the first 45 minutes of Saturday's Rothmans Isthmian League encounter, Wycombe Wanderers had a gale force wind behind them and everything to play for in the second half. But their failure to capitalise on their distinct advantage cost them at least a share of the points.

In the end, Wycombe finished a well beaten side and could have no arguments about the result. Dagenham made the most of their spell with the driving wind and but for a brilliant performance by goalkeeper John Maskell, they could have had the game sewn up there and then.

I doubt if either side has faced such a howling gale for years and the football at times was ludicrous. Several kicks that would normally have travelled 40 or 50 yards went a mere 10,

curling back towards the kicker.

One thing the wind did assist — or should have done — was the power of the ball when the kicker was behind it. Obviously, it was a day to go for goal as often as possible. Dagenham did, Wycombe didn't — and they paid the price.

The Blues had only a handful of goal-bound efforts in the final 45 minutes when they should have had dozens. But they just could not acclimatise themselves and were distinctly disappointing. In the end they were just belting the ball anywhere and hoping for, the best. Dagenham were never seriously pressurised at any stage and the Division One newcomers fought so tigerishly in midfield, they often threw Wycombe out of their stride.

And so, Wanderers slowly fell to their first defeat of the season. It was way back on May 7 that they last finished on the losing side when they went down at Bishop's Stortford.

Saturday's reverse was totally due to their lack of application. Whereas Dagenham made the

most of the elements, Wycombe could do nothing to capitalise on their advantage. True, Howard Kennedy did hit the upright in the second half but overall, they just did not work hard enough at their game. It may seem hard to criticise a team in Saturday's alien conditions, but Wycombe really should have had the experience to deal with the situation.

Gary Hand turned out for his debut at left back with Paul Birdseye dropping to the substitute's bench and Alan Phillips switching to the right. Hand, a fierce competitor, certainly made the back four a more balanced unit. As Birdseye is going on holiday this week the defensive formation will obviously stay the same. When he returns, however, manager Brian Lee will have a real problem on his hands, for Birdseye was playing too well to be out of first team soccer for long.

Dagenham kicked off with the wind swirling into the ground behind them and after the first couple of minutes, their

intentions were obvious. They wanted to build an unassailable goal advantage by the interval and then concentrate on defence in the second half.

Big Norman Welch and Paul Currie both hammered in shots from well outside the penalty area in the first five minutes, both being only fractionally off target. Life was exceedingly difficult for the goalkeeper, the ball coming at him at a vicious pace and also curling and dipping. As well as that, Maskell's goalkicks rarely reached half way and anything above head height ballooned back in the wind.

Maskell made the first of several excellent saves in the 18th minute. Micky Springett received the ball outside the box, cut inside and hammered in a viciously swerving shot which Maskell superbly palmed over the bar.

Dagenham then forced three quick corners, but thanks to some sterling work by Keith Mead — the outstanding defender on the field — Wycombe managed to weather the storm. Obviously against the gale, they could not hope to use the long ball to set up attacks but by combining with short passes along the ground they managed to get into the home half.

Having failed to break through with their first assault, Dagenham eased off after 20 minutes. Wycombe were beginning to get into the game but then, with 29 minutes gone, they were split wide open by a fine move.

The ball was played out of defence by Dennis Moore who put Springett clear on the flank. Cutting inside, he quickly laid the ball into the path of Mal Harkins, who gave Maskell no chance with a well placed shot.

To their credit, Wanderers fought back well after this reverse and worked really hard. Midfield combined well while the strikers came back deeper and played a major role by harassing and chasing.

Wycombe must have been longing for half-time and after 45 minutes there was an air of relief and expectancy. The Blues had done well to hold their opponents to the one goal and were now set for a big assault on the Dagenham goal. It never materialised.

In fact, it was the Daggers who had a great chance to score with the half just five minutes old. Harkins went up for a high ball and outjumped Alan Phillips. With a couple of seconds to spare, Harkins delayed his shot with only Maskell to beat and Dave Bullock dived in to block the

Two minutes later Mick Hollifield got in Wycombe's first effort when he beat John Lye and cut inside. Ian Huttley, however, got down well to Mick's firmly struck shot. Soon afterwards Huttley had to tip over a left wing cross from Hand which dropped just beneath his crossbar.

After these two close shaves, however, Dagenham increased their work rate and by using the ball intelligently and linking well, they denied Wycombe much needed possession.

In the 67th minute, Wanderers came their closest to an equaliser. Huttley's goalkick sailed into the wind and back towards his goalmouth. The 'keeper came out to collect the ball as it bounced but couldn't hold it and Kennedy, up well with the attack, turned in a shot which struck the upright from an acute angle.

Unlike Wycombe, Dagenham were able to mount several attacks against the wind and from one raid, Maskell had to race out and punch clear of Harkins.

As the half wore on it became obvious Wycombe were going to find it exceedingly difficult to score. Given little time in midfield they just did not get enough shots in on target. Kennedy, whose powerful shooting could have made him a matchwinner, only had one chance but the ball fell badly for him and the shot went wide.

Birdseye replaced Graham Mackenzie in the 80th minute but the move brought little change. Tony Horseman sent in one shot with six minutes left but Huttley saved well.

In the closing minutes Wycombe went from bad to worse. The ball was thumped aimlessly upfield and for once, the Blues looked a well beaten side.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; A. Phillips, D. Bullock, K. Mead, G. Hand; G. Mackenzie (sub. P. Birdseye, 80 mins.); H. Kennedy, M. Hollifield; A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin.

DAGENHAM: I. Huttley; J. Lye, D. Moore, N. Welch, P. Currie; G. Brookes, J. Borland, N. Holder; M. Springett, N. Fox, M. Harkins. Sub. S. Lucas (not used).

Referee: P. Wrennell (Burnham). **Half time:** 1-0. **Goalscorer:** Dagenham — Harkins (29).



Sutton 'tonic' for Hayes

WYCOMBE Wanderers, who lost for the first time this season at Dagenham on Saturday, travel to Church Road tonight (Tuesday) where they take on Hayes.

Ironically, while Wanderers were going down 1-0 in a howling gale on Saturday, Hayes were recording their first win in the league this term. They beat the up-and-coming Sutton side 2-0. Alan Carrington and Bobby Ross scored their two goals but Hayes' triumph was marred by the second booking this season of player-manager Alan Harris.

Harris, who took over at Hayes only three weeks before the season started, was also booked in a previous match, bringing Hayes' total of penalty points this season to six — all bookings. Clapton have also six names taken.

As Harris brought the majority of the present team with him at the start of the campaign, it obviously took them time to settle into a unit and results were disappointing.

They drew 1-1 at Hendon and 2-2 with Walton and Hershham. At Leatherhead, Hayes put up a fine performance before going down to the only goal of the game and followed that with a 1-1 draw at Woking. A Rob Williams' goal brought their

downfall at home to Kingstonian and last week Slough Town won 2-0 at Church Road.

Saturday's success over Sutton, therefore, was particularly welcome and Hayes will be full of confidence for tonight's encounter.

Only Tommy James, John O'Sullivan, Roy Butler, Mick Barnard and Graham Cracknell are left from last year's squad and amongst the newcomers is John Watt the former Watford reserve. Cracknell was training with Wanderers in the close season but decided to return to his former club. Hayes are one of nine clubs in Division One who decided to turn professional this term.

With Terry Reardon still unfit, Wycombe are not expected to make changes from the side that lost on Saturday. They are unlikely to come up against such extreme conditions again tonight and were obviously unhappy in such a strong wind at Dagenham.

Gary Hand, whose transfer was received just in time for his

debut on Saturday, will carry on in the fullback shirt.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

	Division I										Pts.
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	C	D		
L'head	7	5	2	0	20	7	17	2	0		
Enfield	7	5	1	1	9	4	16	2	0		
Ilford	6	4	2	0	12	5	14	0	0		
W. Wan.	6	4	1	1	9	5	13	0	0		
Dulwich	7	4	1	2	13	8	13	1	0		
Sutton	7	4	1	2	11	7	12	1	0		
Dagenham	5	4	0	1	10	2	12	0	0		
Tooting	6	4	0	2	9	7	12	2	0		
Clapton	7	4	0	3	8	10	12	6	0		
Bishops	7	3	1	3	11	10	10	0	0		
Wal'stow	6	2	2	2	6	5	8	0	0		
Hitchin	7	2	1	4	12	14	7	2	0		
Waltham	7	2	1	4	8	20	7	1	0		
Barking	6	2	0	4	7	7	6	1	0		
Woking	7	1	3	3	9	10	6	2	0		
Hayes	7	1	3	3	6	8	6	0	0		
Ley'stone	6	2	0	4	5	10	6	1	0		
Oxford	6	2	0	4	6	13	8	0	0		
K'stonian	7	2	0	5	3	11	6	1	0		
Hendon	7	1	2	4	6	11	5	1	0		
Slough	6	1	1	4	3	5	4	0	0		
Bromley	5	1	0	4	3	7	3	0	0		

	Division II										Pts.
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	C	D		
Chesham	7	4	2	1	13	3	14	1	0		
St. Albans	7	4	2	1	12	10	14	1	0		
Staines	7	4	1	2	7	4	13	0	4		
M'head	7	4	1	2	10	7	13	0	0		
Wokingham	7	4	0	3	8	6	12	2	0		
Southall	7	3	2	2	9	7	11	2	0		
Horsham	6	3	1	2	10	4	10	1	0		
Harwich	7	3	1	3	11	8	10	1	0		
Tilbury	7	3	1	3	12	11	10	0	0		
Harlow	7	3	1	3	9	13	10	2	0		
Carshalton	7	3	0	4	6	8	9	2	0		
Croydon	7	2	2	3	9	12	8	4	0		
C. Casuals	7	2	2	3	8	7	11	0	0		
Hertford	6	2	1	3	7	8	9	5	0		
Finchley	7	2	1	4	4	12	7	1	0		
Aveley	6	2	0	4	5	8	6	1	0		
Hampton	6	1	1	4	5	8	4	0	0		
Boreham	6	0	3	3	6	10	3	2	0		

C — Cautions. D — Dismissals.